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DCI BRIEFING

16 May 1961

BERLIN

I. Khrushchev has committed himself to a solution of the Berlin problem this year, preferably by negotiations but by unilateral action if necessary.

A. Khrushchev still apparently hopes to obtain Western acceptance of change in Berlin's status through high-level talks and has avoided a sharp increase in tensions over city.

1. Evidence indicates East Germans ordered by Moscow to soft-pedal Berlin problem; most of GDR concessions made last December to West Germans in order to obtain reinstatement of 1961 trade agreement have been implemented.

B. In their 24 April talks Khrushchev told West German Ambassador Kroll that the bloc had set no precise deadlines and would be willing to wait until West German elections in September and "possibly" until CPSU party congress in October before convening a bloc conference to sign a separate peace treaty with East Germans.

1. He strongly emphasized during talks his determination to achieve a solution in 1961.

2. As in his earlier talks with Walter Lippmann, Khrushchev said that he realized the President needed time to work out his position.

S E C R E T

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II. In any negotiation which takes place in the next few months, the Soviets would almost certainly not hold fast to their maximum demand for a peace treaty with the "two Germanies" and the immediate conversion of West Berlin into a demilitarized free city.

A. Instead we feel that they will concentrate on getting an "interim agreement" of the kind outlined at Geneva in 1959, which would constitute a first step toward elimination of Allied occupation rights in Berlin.

III. There are no indications that Communists have abandoned their tactics to weaken Western position in Berlin.

A. East Germany has not renounced its claim to "sovereignty" over all Berlin, nor its assertions that it has right to control all traffic from West Germany to Berlin.

B. On 24 April the East German party newspaper charged the West Germans with interfering with interzonal trade.

C. Although Berlin remains vulnerable to infinite variety of Communist pressures and harassments, East Germans probably will not cause any serious trouble in city until USSR has attempted to negotiate change in city's status.

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